

MIRACLES,

No Violations

OF THE

LAWVS

(4.)

OF

NATURE.

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*Quid non miraculo est, cum primum in notitiam venit ? Plinius Histor. Nat. lib. 7. cap. 1.*

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# PREMONITION

## TO THE

### CANDID READER.

**I**T is the Judgement of most of the ancient Fathers of the Christian Faith, and of the most learned Theologues among the Moderns; that the Authors of the holy Scriptures, when they speak of natural things, do not design to instruct men in Physical Speculations and the Science of Natural Philosophy; but aim only to excite pious Affections in their breasts, and to induce them to the Worship and Veneration of the true God, whom they celebrated in their Writings: whose Power and Goodness they therefore took all fair Occasions to demonstrate, that they might, from as well the natural as civil Order of things, establish in the Minds of the Readers a right and firm Belief thereof. This then being the only End they proposed to themselves, they found themselves obliged so to explicate the visible Works of God and the nature of the things they were to relate, as that they might not, by Novity and Insolency, appear too remote and abhorrent from the

## Premonition to the

common Sence and pre-conceiv'd Opinions of the Vulgar, to whose narrow Capacity and groveling Wit they were always to condescend; yea even to wrest the general Causes and Ends of the whole Creation in favour of the Peoples Prejudices, as if all things in the Universe were ordain'd only for the good and benefit of Mankind. Nor could it conduce to this their principal purpose, to insist upon second Causes, or defer much to their Efficacy: but rather in all Contingents or Events to recur immediately to God himself, the First Cause, Author and President of Nature; omitting to give any account of that Apparatus and long Series of Causes, which Philosophers use to remark in explicating the Phenomena of Nature, and which Nature her self uses in their production. Whence it is, that these pious Writers compendiously refer all things to the immediate Power of God and to his irresistible Will and Command: leaving men to learn from the Light of Nature or right Reason, (which alone is able to teach it) that the Power of God and the Power of Nature are one and the same, and that all her Laws are his eternal Decrees. For their business was, not to treat of the Principles of Natural Philosophy (as I said before) but to convince the unthinking Multitude that God is the Origine of all things, that universal Nature is obedient to his Will, and that his Providence presides over and governs all things, as  
well.



## candid Reader.

well natural as humane ; which he so disposes and accommodates, as to make them conspire to the good and happiness of those who follow Piety and Vertue, and to the punishment of the Impious and Vicious : and the Multitude was to be convinced, not by leading their Reason with a long Chain of Premisses and Conclusions Theological ; but by surprizing their Imagination, and accommodating Events to their common Opinions, however unreasonable in themselves.

This well consider'd, as we are not to admire, if we find in the holy Scripture many memorable things related as Miracles, which yet notwithstanding proceeded from the fixt and immutable Order of Nature, and necessarily flow'd from a Series of Causes ordain'd according to her eternal Laws, that is, from God's Decrees, so ought we not rashly to accuse any man of Infidelity, only because he refuses to believe, that those Miracles were effected by the immediate Power of God, such as is not only inconsistent with, but point blank repugnant to the fundamental Laws and Constitutions of Nature, which he in his infinite Wisdom hath made, and made so ample and fertil, as to extend to the certain production of whatever Events he hath will'd and decreed. For first, among the many Miracles related to be done in favour of the Israelites, there is (I think) no one, that can be apologetically demonstrated to be repugnant to th' establish'd Order of Nature: and then the Power of God being infinite, that  
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## Premonition to the, &c.

of Nature must be so too, because one and the same with the Power of God; but humane Understanding is finite, and consequently incapable to know how far the Laws of Nature extend themselves. In a word therefore, If by a Miracle in the general, you understand nothing else but a certain Work or Effect, the Causes of which cannot be explicated by men ignorant of the Principles of natural things: I acknowledge many such Miracles to have been done in all Ages, and among all Nations. Nay more, if by a Miracle you mean that, the Causes whereof transcend the Capacity even of the most acute and profound Philosopher; I will not deny, but that among the many things related in the Scripture, as Miracles, some are found, that in this sence also may deserve that name; because I do not measure the Power of Nature by the unequal Line of humane Wit. But if you will have a Miracle to be such a rare Effect, which is absolutely above or (which really is all one) contrary to the Laws of Nature, or which cannot possibly follow from her fixt and immutable Order: then I dare not believe that any such Miracle hath ever happen'd in Nature, lest I oppose God to God, that is, admit that God changes his own Decrees; which from the Perfection of the divine Nature, I know to be impossible. If you, candid Reader, know so too, I have already said more than is necessary to the defence of this innocent Discourse, and therefore acquiesce in hope of being rightly understood.



# Of Miracles.

**B**Y *MIRACLES* are understood the admirable or wonderful Works of God. But because Men following their own natural Reason, are wont to doubt, whether what is by a Prophet deliver'd for the Command of God, be truly the Command of God, or not ; *Miracles* in the sacred Scriptures are call'd *Signs*, as signifying the Will of God : as also in Ethnick Writers, for the same Reason, they are call'd *Ostenta* and *Portenta*, as shewing or portending the divine Will concerning Things to come. That we may therefore understand, what a *Miracle* is, we must observe, what Works those are, which men generally admire or wonder at. The Things then that cause men to admire any Work or remarkable Effect, are only *two*. *One* is, if that Work be *rare*, the like whereof they have seldom or never seen done before : The *other*, if after the Work is done, they *cannot conceive* it to have been done by natural Causes, but only by the immediate operation of God himself. For if we understand the natural Causes of the Fact, however rare it be ; or if we have often seen the like done before, though we do not conceive the natural Cause thereof ; we no longer admire it, nor call it a *Miracle*. *Quæ usu quotidiano novimus & frequenti experientia, ea neq; admiramur, neq; ad eorum causas investigamus.*

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*gandas multum excitari solemus, quanquam sepe occultiores sint inventusq; difficiliore aliiis, quæ obraritatem, hominum studia & animos maximè occupant.*

Thus, for example, if we should hear an Ox or Horse speak, we should call it a *Miracle*, because *rare*, and of which we are not able to imagine a natural Cause. Thus also in the generation of Animals, every unusual Error or deviation of Nature, might be held for a *Miracle*. But if a Man or any other Animal generate his like *in specie*, though we are equally ignorant how this and that is perform'd, we do not take it for a *Miracle*. Also if a Man should be transform'd into a Stone, 'twould be a *Miracle*, because *rare*: but if Wood should be converted into a Stone, because such conversion is often seen, 'tis no *Miracle*: and yet notwithstanding we are as ignorant how God effects that conversion in Wood, as how he effects it in a Man. The Rain-bow that first appear'd in the Sky, was a *Miracle*; because the *first*, that is, the like had never been seen before; and because it was shewn by God for a *Sign*, to signify that the World should never again be destroy'd by a Deluge. But at this day, because Rain-bows are often seen, no man looks upon them as *Miracles*. Again, many wonderful Works are produced by humane Art; yet because after they are effected, we come to understand how and by what means, we therefore not account them for *Miracles*. For,

*Admiration* depends for the most part upon men's *Knowledge* and *Experience*, so that what seems to be a *Miracle* to one man, seems not to be so to another. And unskilful and superstitious men are wont to take for great *Miracles* those things, which the Learned and well experienced do not at all admire. Eclipses of the Sun and Moon have in times past been mistaken for supernatural Effects



Effects and Prodigies by the Vulgar ; while learned Astronomers understanding the natural Causes of them, have certainly predicted them. Also cunning men confederate among themselves, closely enquiring into and discovering some secret actions of an unwary and simple man, and afterward relating them to him, have been held in great admiration, as if they had come to the knowledge of those Secrets by supernatural means, by divine Revelation at least : when the same Confederates have not been able so easily to impose upon wary and prudent persons. *Admiration* then ( we see ) is generally greater or less, according to the various degrees of Science and observation among men ; the most ignorant being most prone to wonder : and the *Causes* of Admiration, which many times makes a Miracle of what is purely natural, we have found to be *Rarity* and *Ignorance*.

II. If this Disquisition be yet a little farther pursued, it will soon appear, that *Superstition* also contributes largely to the belief of Miracles. For the Minds of men being naturally prone to be agitated betwixt *Fear* and *Hope* of the future ( the two grand Passions that govern humane life ) thence it comes to pass, that they very often fancy a certain extraordinary divine power in all Contingents which are unusual, and the natural Causes of which they do not comprehend, as if those Contingents certainly proceeded, not from the order of Nature, but from an immediate operation of God transcending or changing that order ; and that they presignified some good or evil Fortune to themselves. For the Vulgar thinks, that the Power and Providence of God is then most apparent, when they observe any Event *unusual* in Nature, and contrary to the opinion they have from custom conceiv'd of Nature ; chiefly if the Event seem to promise any thing

of Commodity or Advantage to themselves: imagining that the *Existence* of a supream Being can be by no way better prov'd, than by the inversion of the course of Nature, which they suppose to happen in all unusual Events. Whence it is, that common Heads always accuse those Philosophers of *Atheism* and design to extirpate the belief of God, at least of his Providence, who endeavour to explicate what they call *Miracles* by natural Causes, and study to understand the Reasons of them: erroneously conceiving, that God (forsooth) remains idle while Nature acts in her usual Order, and on the contrary, that the power of Nature is suspended, and the action of all natural Causes arrested or frustrated, while God acts. Thus they form in their Brains confused Notions of two distinct Powers, one of *God*, t'other of *Nature*, which yet they allow to be determined by God: but what to understand by either of these Powers, and wherein the difference they suppose, consists; they know not. Only this they will tell you, that the unusual Works of Nature are *Miracles* or the Works of God; and partly out of blind Devotion, *i. e.* *Superstition*, partly from an itch of opposing wise men that study Natures Laws and Constitutions, they please themselves in their Ignorance, and think they please God too with their affected *Admiration*: not considering how much they derogate from his infinite Wisdom, while they conceive the Laws of Nature by him made and establish'd, insufficient to effect all things he hath decreed to produce for the ends in order to which he ordain'd them, without variation.

III. This popular Error seems to derive its Original from the primitive *Jews*, who that they might convince the *Ethnicks* of their time, who adored visible Gods, the Sun, Moon, Earth, Water, Air, &c. and shew them that those



those Gods were weak and inconstant, or mutable, and under the Command of the invisible God whom themselves worshipped; recounted to them the *Miracles* he had wrought for their sakes, as cogent Arguments that all Nature was by his Superintendency and Command directed only to their Commodity and Advantage, other Nations the while having not an equal share of his Providence. A perswasion so agreeable and grateful to men, that to this day they have not ceas'd to feign Miracles in favour of themselves, that others might believe them to be more beloved by God, and dearer in the eye of his Providence, than the rest of Mankind; yea more, the final Cause for which he at first created, and continually directs all things. What doth not the folly of the Vulgar arrogate to it self; having not so much as one sound conception or thought concerning either God or Nature, confounding the eternal Decrees of God with the mutable Placits of men, and feigning Nature to be so narrow and limited, as that man is the chiefeft part of the whole Creation?

IV. Having from this brief Enquiry learned, what is generally understood by the word *Miracle*, what are the *Opinions* and *Prejudices* of the Vulgar concerning Miracles, and whence those Opinions and Prejudices have proceeded: urged as well by zeal for the Glory of God, (which is never propagated by erroneous conceptions of his Nature, Power, Wisdom and Providence) as by Charity for the unlearned part of Mankind (which is always by Ignorance seduced into Superstition) I resolve to endeavour by a few plain Reasons to shew the unsoundness, yea the absurdity of their Doctrine, who teach, that *in every Miracle God acts by a power distinct from, and superior to that of Nature*, which is the universal Law by him ordain'd

ordain'd and fixt for government of his Creatures.

V. To effect this, I perswade my self, I need do no more but convince the judicious Reader of the verity of these four things. (1.) *That nothing in the World happens or comes to pass contrary to Nature, but that Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order :* (2.) *That from Miracles we cannot come to understand and certainly know either the Essence, or Existence, or Providence of God ; but that all these may far better be collected from the fixt and immutable Order of Nature :* (3.) *That the holy Scripture it self, by the Decrees and Volitions, and consequently the Providence of God, understands nothing else but the very same Order of Nature, which necessarily follows from his eternal Laws :* (4.) *That most men have erred in the manner of interpreting the Miracles recorded in the holy Scriptures.* For, these things being well prov'd, I see not what can remain to frustrate my present Design.

VI. As for the FIRST therefore, *viz. that all Events happen according to the eternal Order of Nature ;* this may easily be inferr'd even from hence, that whatsoever God wills or determines, involves eternal necessity and truth. For, since the *Intellect* of God is not distinguish'd from his *Will*, and therefore to say that God *wills* any thing, is all one with saying that he *understands* that very thing ; by the same necessity which follows from the divine Nature and Perfection, it is a genuine and inevitable consequence, that for God to understand any thing, as it is, is for him to will or decree the same, as it is. But since nothing is necessarily true, but only from the divine Decree ; hence it most clearly follows, that the universal Laws of Nature are the meer Decrees of God, which follow from the necessity and perfection of the divine Nature. If therefore any thing should be contingent in Nature, that  
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should be repugnant to her eternal Laws; the same would be repugnant also to the divine Decree, Intellect, and Nature: or if any man should affirm, that God does any thing contrary to the Laws of Nature, he would be compell'd to grant also, that God acts contrary to his own Nature, than which nothing can be more absurd. The same may be farther proved also by this, that the *power* of Nature is no other but the power and vertue of God; and the power of God no other but the very *Essence* of God, and certainly that must be eternally the same or immutable. Nothing therefore can be contingent in Nature, that is repugnant to her universal Laws; nay that is not convenient or agreeable to them, or follows not from them. For whatsoever is done, is done by the Will and eternal Decree of God, *i. e.* is done according to the Laws and Rules, which involve eternal necessity and truth, and which though they be not all known to us, are perpetually without the least omission or deviation strictly observ'd by Nature. Nor does any sound Reason urge us to ascribe a *limited* power and vertue to her, or to think that her Laws are fit only for some certain Events, and not for all. For, since the vertue and power of Nature is the same with the vertue and power of God; and her Laws and Rules, his Decrees (as was just now prov'd:) we are obliged to believe, that the power of Nature is *infinite*, and her Laws so made, as to extend their force to all things conceiv'd by the divine Understanding. Otherwise we could not avoid running into that dangerous Error of the Multitude, that God hath created Nature so impotent, and given her Laws and Rules so barren, as that he is compell'd sometimes to help her by new Ordinances and supplies of Vertue, in order to her Support and Conservation, and that things may succeed according  
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to his Intention and Design. An Error than which nothing is more alien from Reason, nothing more unworthy the Majesty of the divine Nature.

Now from these Positions, that in Nature nothing can happen or come to pass, which does not follow from her Laws; and that her Laws extend themselves to all things conceiv'd by the divine Understanding; and in fine that Nature keeps a fixt and immutable Order: from these undeniable Truths, I say, it most clearly follows, that the name of a *Miracle* cannot be otherwise understood, than *respectively to the opinions of men*, and that a *Miracle* signifies nothing else but a *Work, the natural Cause of which we are not able to explicate by the example of another usually observ'd by us*; at least he is not able to explicate, who writes or relates the *Miracle*. I might say, that a *Miracle* is that, of which we are not able, by the light of Nature, to explain the Cause from the Principles we understand of natural things: but, because *Miracles* have been wrought, *Ad captum Vulgi*, to convince the Vulgar, which was wholly ignorant of the Principles of natural things; certain it is, the Ancients took that for a *Miracle*, which they could not explain in the same manner, by which the Vulgar is wont to explain natural things, namely by recurring to *Memory*, so as to recal to mind another like thing, which they are wont to imagine without admiration. For the Vulgar always think they then sufficiently understand any thing, when they do not admire it. Nor doth it appear that either the Ancients in their Times, or any of their Successors since even down to ours, have had any other *Criterion* or Rule whereby to discern *Miracles* from other Contingents, *i. e. insolite* or rare Events from *usual*, besides this here mention'd, *viz. that these seem'd capable of Explication from the known*



known Principles of natural things, but *those* not, according to the judgement of the Vulgar. And therefore we are not forbidden to think, that in the *sacred Writings* themselves many things are related as *Miracles*, of which sufficient Causes may be given from the known Principles of natural Philosophy ; and that too without any the least derogation from either the Glory of God, or the Authority of the Writers, or from the scope or end for which the things were done and written ; as I design to prove when I shall have conducted the Reader to the 4<sup>th</sup>. and last Head of this brief Discourse, which concerns the *Interpretation* of Miracles. For now the Clew of my Method brings us to the

VII. SECOND Position, *viz.* *That from Miracles, neither the Essence, nor the Existence, nor the Providence of God can be understood by us ; but on the contrary, that all these may be better perceiv'd from the fixt and invariable Order of Nature,* which to demonstrate I thus proceed. Forasmuch as the *Existence* of God is not *per se* known to us, it ought to be necessarily concluded from Notions, whose verity is so evident, firm and impregnable, that no power can be given or conceiv'd, by which they can be changed ; to us at least, from the time wherein we conclude upon the Existence of God from them, they ought to appear such, if we will secure our Conclusion from all possible Doubts : for if we could conceive that those Notions might be changed by any Power, whatsoever it be ; then should we doubt of their verity, and consequently of that of our Conclusion also, namely of God's Existence, nor could we ever be certain of any other thing whatever. Besides this, we know not this or that thing to be *according to Nature*, or *repugnant* to it, unless we can evince the same to be convenient, or repugnant to those funda-  
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mental Notions or Principles. Wherefore if we could conceive any thing in Nature possible to be done by any Power whatever, that is repugnant to Nature; that thing would be repugnant to those first Notions, and so ought to be rejected as absurd; or else (as was just now intimated) we must doubt of the truth of those first Notions, and by consequence also of the Being of God, and of all other things whatever and howsoever perceiv'd. *Miracles* then, if understood to be Works repugnant to the first Order of Nature, are so far from evincing the Existence of God, that on the contrary they would make us doubt of it, when without them we might be absolutely certain of the same, knowing that all things in Nature follow a fixt and immutable Order. But let it be suppos'd, that what cannot be explicated by natural Causes, is a *Miracle*; which may be understood two ways, either as that which hath indeed natural Causes, but such as cannot be investigated by humane Understanding; or as that which hath no Cause but only the Will of God. Now because all things that are done by natural Causes, are done also by the sole Power and Will of God; we are under a plain necessity of coming to this Conclusion, That a *Miracle*, whether it be effected by natural Causes, or not, is a Work that transcends humane Understanding: but from a Work that transcends humane Understanding, we can know nothing: for whatever we clearly and distinctly understand, must come to be understood by us, either by it self; or by some other thing which we clearly and distinctly understand; *therefore* from a *Miracle* or Work that transcends our Capacity, we can understand neither the *Essence* of God, nor his *Existence*, nor his *Providence*, nor any thing else concerning him, or his Minister Nature. But on the contrary, since we certainly know,



know, that all things are determined and decreed by God, that the Operations of Nature follow from the Essence of God, and that the Laws of Nature are the eternal Decrees and Volitions of God ; we are obliged absolutely to conclude, that we so much the better know God and his Will, by how much the better we know natural things, and more clearly understand how they depend upon their first Cause, and how they operate according to the eternal Laws of Nature. Wherefore by reason of our Understanding, those Works that we clearly and distinctly understand, are with much more right to be call'd the Works of God, and to be referr'd to his Will, than those we do not at all understand, although they strongly exercise the *Imagination*, and ravish men into *admiration* of them : forasmuch as only those Works of Nature, which we clearly and distinctly understand, render the knowledge of God more sublime, and most clearly shew his Will and Decrees. They therefore that when they do not understand a thing, have recourse to the *Will of God*, talk impertinently, shew more of Bigotry than Wit, and ridiculously profess their Ignorance.

VIII. Moreover, could we conclude any thing from *Miracles*, yet we could never thence conclude of the *Existence* of God. For since a Miracle is a Work *limited*, and never implies any but a certain and limited Power : most certain and evident it is, that from such an Effect we cannot rightly infer the Existence of a Cause whose Power is *infinite*, but at most of a Cause whose Power is greater. I say, *at most* ; because from many Causes concurring there may follow some Work, whose Force and Power is indeed less than the Power of all its Causes put together, but far greater than the Power of any one of them taken singularly. But because the Laws of Nature ( as I have

already shewn ) extend themselves to *infinite* things, and are conceiv'd by us under a certain semblance of *Eternity*, and Nature according to them proceeds in a certain and *immutable* Order ; those very Laws do in some measure indicate to us the *Infinity*, *Eternity*, and *Immutability* of God. I conclude therefore, that by *Miracles* we cannot know God, and his Existence, and his Providence ; but that these may be far better concluded from the fixt and immutable Order of Nature. In this Conclusion I speak of a Miracle as understood to be nothing else but a *Work that transcends humane Understanding*, or is believ'd to do so. For, if it were supposed to destroy the Order of Nature, or to interrupt it, or to be repugnant to it ; then certainly it could not only give us no knowledge of God, but on the contrary would take from us all the knowledge we naturally have, and make us doubt of God, and of all other things.

Nor do I here acknowledge any difference betwixt a Work *contrary* to Nature, and a Work *above* Nature ; that is (as some are pleas'd to speak) a Work not in truth repugnant to Nature, but which cannot be produced or effected by her Power alone. For since a *Miracle* is done, *Non extra naturam, sed in ipsa natura* ; though it be held to be *supra naturam*, yet still must it interrupt the Order of Nature, which we conceive to be, from the Decrees of God, fixt and immutable. If therefore any thing should be done in Nature, that should not follow from her Laws ; it would necessarily be repugnant to the Order which God hath by the universal Laws of Nature establish'd in the Universe ; and consequently the belief of it would make us doubt of all things else, and lead us into *Atheism*. And thus, if I be not grossly mistaken in the force of the Reasons here alledged, I have sufficiently demon-



demonstrated what in the *second* place I intended : and from the same Reasons I take liberty to conclude *de novo*, that a Miracle against Nature, or above Nature, is a meer *absurdity* ; and therefore that by a *Miracle* in holy Scripture nothing else can rightly be understood, but such a Work of Nature, which either really transcends humane Understanding, or is believ'd to do so.

IX. Nevertheless, for more assurance of the truth of this new Doctrine, I think my self concern'd to confirm that part of it which affirms, *that from Miracles we cannot know God*. This I humbly conceive may be done by having recourse to the Authority of the *holy Scriptures* themselves. For, though they no where *ex professo* and plainly teach that Position, *viz. that God is not made known to us by Miracles* : yet notwithstanding there are found in them many places, from which rightly understood, the same may be concluded easily and genuinely. Among these, chiefly from that of *Deuteronomy* 13. where *Moses* commands the people of *Israel* to put to death a false and seducing Prophet, though he should work Miracles. The words of the Text are these in our most correct Translation. *If there arise among you a Prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, — And the Sign or Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them ; — Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet, or that dreamer of dreams ; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. — And that Prophet, or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, &c.* From which it clearly follows, that *Miracles* may be wrought even by false Prophets, and that men, unless they be well guarded by the true knowledge  
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and cordial Love of God, may as easily be induced by *Miracles* to embrace and serve *false* Gods, as to acknowledge and worship the *true* God. For he adds, *because the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love him, &c.*

Secondly, The *Israelites* could not from so many *Miracles* form in their minds any sound Conception or Notion of God or his Providence; as Experience it self testifies. For, when they had perswaded themselves that *Moses* was gone from them, presently they importune *Aaron* to furnish them with visible Deities, and (to the indelible shame of their Nation) embrace the Image of a Calf for an Idea or Representation of their God, which they at length from so many *Miracles* form'd to themselves. *Asaph* also, though he had often heard of, and believ'd all the *Miracles* done among his Ancestors, yet doubted of God's Providence, and had deflected from the right way of absolute dependance thereupon, had he not at last understood true Happiness to consist only therein, and Religion in Justice and Charity: as we read in *Psalms* 73. Nor was *Solomon* himself, though excellent in Wisdom, and King of the *Jews* too, even when the Affairs of that Nation were at the highest point of Prosperity; able to form to himself any competent Notion of God, after all he had read concerning the *Miracles* recorded in the Books of *Moses*. For he more than once (*Eccles.* 3. v. 19, 20, 21. and *Chap.* 9. v. 2, 3, &c.) confelleth, he suspected all things to happen by *Chance*: so far seems he to have been from concluding a divine Providence from belief of those *Miracles*. And as for the *Prophets*; it may be without much labour collected from their Writings, that few or none of them well understood, how the Order of Nature and the Events of men could be brought to consist with the Conception or  
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Notion they had form'd in their Mind of the Providence of God : which yet hath been always very clear to *Philosophers*, who endeavour from clear Conceptions rightly to understand things as they are ; those I mean, who constitute true Felicity in nothing but Vertue and Tranquility of Mind, not studying to bring Nature to obey them, but on the contrary to bring themselves to obey Nature : as certainly knowing, that God directs Nature, as the universal Law thereof, not as the particular Laws of humane Nature require ; and so that he takes care not only of Mankind, but of the whole Universe. Constant it is therefore, and that too even from *sacred Writ*, that Miracles do not give a true knowledge of God, nor clearly teach his Providence ; which is what I designed to prove. And as for what is found in some places of the *Scripture*, that to some unattentive Readers may seem perhaps irreconcilable to this my Doctrine ; as ( in *Exod. 10. v. 2.* ) that *God hardened the heart of Pharaoh and the hearts of his servants, and shewed wonderful Signs before them, that the Israelites might know him to be God* : it doth not follow from thence, that Miracles do in truth teach us to know and acknowledge God, but only that the *Jews* had such *Opinions*, as that they might be easily convinced by those Miracles. For evident it is, that the Prophetick Reasons mentioned in *Scripture*, or such as are form'd from *Revelation*, are drawn, not from universal and common Notions, but from the granted ( however absurd ) *Opinions* of those to whom the things are reveal'd, or whom the *holy Spirit* intends to convince. Which might here, if I had not firmly resolv'd not to prolong this Discourse by Digressions, be prov'd from many Examples, and also by the testimony of *St. Paul*, who with the *Greeks* made himself a *Greek*, and with the *Jews* a *Jew* ; that is, conform'd

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his Doctrine sometimes to the common *Opinions* of the *Gretians*, sometimes to those of the *Jews*. But though the Miracles done in the fight of the *Egyptians* might convince them, and the *Jews* also, from their common Opinions: yet could they not give a true Idea and knowledge of God, but only bring both Nations to concede, that there was a *divine Numen* more powerful than all things known to them, and that this *divine Numen* took more care of the *Hebrews*, all whose Affairs at that time succeeded most happily even above their hope, than of the *Egyptians* or any other People whatever; but not that God takes *equal care of all men*, which *Philosophy* alone can teach. And therefore the *Jews*, and all other men who have not, unless from the disparate state of humane Affairs and the unequal Fortune of men, known the Providence of God, have perswaded themselves that the *Jews* Nation was more beloved by God than the rest of Mankind, though the *Jews* exceeded not the rest in the Perfections of humane Nature, or in their Inclinations to Virtue and Piety; as may be soon collected from their History. I conclude therefore, that Miracles teach not men the true knowledge of God and of his Providence: and find my self at liberty to proceed to my

X. THIRD Position, which you may remember to be this; *That according to the true sence of the holy Scriptures themselves, by the Decrees and Commands of God, and consequently by the Providence of God, nothing else is signified but the fixt and immutable Order of Nature: that is, that when the Scripture saith, that such or such a thing was done by God or by the Will of God, it doth really mean no other but this, that the Fact was perform'd according to the Laws and Order of Nature; not as the Vulgar thinks, that Nature ceas'd to proceed in her due course*



course whilst the thing was in doing, or that her Order was for some time interrupted. The Scripture indeed doth not directly teach such things which belong not to the Doctrine thereof; because it designs not to shew the Natural Causes of things, nor to teach things meerly speculative: and therefore what I here propose to my self to prove, must be by consequence deduced from some Histories of the Scripture, which are casually related prolixly and with many Circumstances. Of which I will produce a few, as Examples of the rest.

In the first Book of *Samuel*, chap. 9. and vers. 15, & 16. it is related, that God reveal'd to *Samuel*, that he would send *Saul* to him; and yet God sent him not expressly, as men are wont to send Messengers on purpose to others, but this Mission of *Saul* by God was nothing but the very Order of Nature. For *Saul* was in quest of Asses which he had lost ( as is related in the same Chapter ) and now deliberating to return home without them, by the counsel of his Servant he diverts his Journey to the Prophet *Samuel*, to know from him where he might find his Asses, nor can it be collected from the whole Narration, that he had any other Mandate from God, besides this Series of natural Causes or Order of Nature, to address himself to *Samuel*.

In *Psalms* 105. v. 24. 'tis said, that God changed the mind of the *Egyptians*, so that they hated the Children of *Israel*; and yet that this *mutation* also was wholly natural, appears from *Exod. chap. 1.* where an account is given of the Reason, and that no light one neither, why the *Egyptians* reduced the *Israelites* to Servitude, viz. lest the *Israelites* being grown too numerous and mighty, should in case of War joyn with their Enemies and overpower them.

In *Genes.* 9. v. 13. God saith to *Noah*, that he would give the Rainbow in the Clouds for a Sign: which action of God was no other but a certain refraction and reflexion of the Rays of the Sun, which they suffer'd in the small drops of Water whereof the Cloud consisted. So that the *Phenomenon* it self was then (as now) a natural *Meteor*, only the *Signal*ity was new.

In *Psal.* 147. v. 18. the natural action and warmth of the Wind, by which the Hoar-frost and Snow are thawed and melted, is call'd the Word of God; and so are the Wind and Cold also in *vers.* 15. In like manner Wind and Fire are call'd in *Psal.* 104. *vers.* 4. God's Angels and Ministers. All which places, with many other of the like importance frequently occurring in *sacred Writ*, most clearly shew, that the *Decree, Command, Saying, and Word* of God, signifie nothing else but the *Action and Order of Nature*: and therefore it is not to be doubted, but that all the *Miracles* recounted in the *Scripture*, came to pass *naturally*; and yet notwithstanding are duely referr'd to God, because his Power and the Power of Nature are one and the same; and because it is not the design of the *Scripture* to explain Events by their natural Causes, but only to relate those, which surprize the *Imagination*; and that also in such a method and style, which serves more familiarly and easily to excite *Admiration*, and consequently *Devotion* in the Minds of the Vulgar. If therefore in the *Scripture* there be found some Things or Facts, whose Causes we understand not, and which seem to have been done *besides* or *contrary* to the Order of Nature; they ought not to amuse us, nor to hinder us from believing, that what hath really hapned, hapned naturally. Which is yet farther confirmed by this, that in *Miracles* were found many *Circumstances*, though not always noted in the



the Narrations, chiefly when they are described in a *Poetick* style : the *Circumstances*, I say, of Miracles shew clearly, that they require natural Causes. For instance, to infest the *Egyptians* with Scabs, it was requisite *Moses* should sprinkle Ashes of the Furnace upward into the Air, (*Exod. 9. v. 8.*) Locusts also at the natural Command of God, namely by an East-wind blowing strongly a whole day and a night, came up and cover'd the Land of *Egypt*: and left it again, being carried away by as mighty a West-wind (*Exod. 10. v. 14, 19.*) By the same Command of God, namely an East-wind, that blew most strongly the whole night, the Red Sea gave way to the *Israelites* (*Exod. 14. v. 21.*) The same may be inferr'd also from the manner of the Prophet *Elisha's* raising up the *Shunamites* Son, that perhaps only seem'd to be dead. For *Elisha* thought it necessary to lay his Body upon the Child's Body, to put his Mouth upon his Mouth, his Eyes upon his Eyes, his Hands upon his Hands, and to stretch himself often in that posture; and all this to excite Heat and Motion in the vital Parts of the Child, and Sternutation in his Brain, until the Child open'd his Eyes first, and then neez'd seven times: More Examples of this kind might easily be brought hither out of the Books of the *Old Testament*, were not these already alledged sufficient to evince, that various Circumstances and natural Actions are requir'd to the production of *Miracles*, and consequently that they are all effected by God according to the Order of Nature, not by interrupting or perverting it. I see not therefore, why it may not be lawful for us to believe, that though the Circumstances of *Miracles* be not always deliver'd in the Narrations of them, nor their natural Causes assign'd; yet they were not effected without them. The same is constant also from *Exod. 14. v. 27.* where 'tis

only related in short, that at the bare beck of *Moses*, and the stretching forth of his Hand, the Sea flowed back upon the *Egyptian* Host, without the least mention of any *Wind* that might impel the Waters: and yet in the *Canticle*, or Song of *Moses*, (*chap. 15. v. 10.*) 'tis said expressly, this Miracle was perform'd by God's *blowing with a most violent Wind upon the Sea.*

XI. Here some perhaps will *object*, that we find in the *Scripture* very many things, which seem absolutely incapable of Solution by any natural Causes whatsoever; as that the Sins of men could cause Famine, and their Prayers bring down Rain and cause Fertility of the Earth, and that Faith could restore Sight to the Blind, and others equally strange. But this Objection I have (I think) prevented, where I asserted, that it is not the design or scope of the *Scriptura* to teach the knowledge of things by their next Causes, but only to relate them in that Order or Method, and in those Phrases, by which it may most efficaciously move men, and chiefly the Vulgar, to Devotion and Reverence toward God; for which Reason it many times speaks of natural things, yea even of God himself very improperly; as aiming to affect and occupy the *Imagination* of men, not to convince their *Reason*. For should the *Scripture* relate the Fall and Devastation of any Empire, Kingdom, or Commonwealth, as *politick Historians* are wont to do, assigning all the remote, concurrent, and proxime Causes thereof: the Narration would not at all affect and commove the common People: who yet are apt to be strongly surpriz'd, and as it were charm'd into Admiration and Devotion, when the whole Revolution is described in Strains and Figures of *Poesie*, and referr'd only to the immediate Power and Decree of God. When therefore the *Scripture* relates, that the  
Earth



Earth became barren for the Sins of men, or that the Blind recover'd Sight by Faith; we have no more reason to be moved to admiration, than when it tells us, that God is *angry, sorrowful, penitent* of his Promises or Facts, *mindful* of his Promise upon sight of the Sign pre-ordain'd, and many other like things, which are either deliver'd Poetically, or related according to the pre-conceiv'd Opinions and Prejudices of the Writer. Wherefore we here absolutely *conclude*, that all the Events that are truly related in the Scripture to have come to pass, proceeded necessarily (as all other Contingents do) according to the immutable Laws of Nature; and that if any thing be found, which can be apodictically demonstrated to be repugnant to those Laws, or not to have followed from them: we may safely and piously believe the same not to have been dictated by divine Inspiration, but impiously added to the sacred Volumes by sacrilegious men: for whatever is against Nature, is against *Reason*; and whatever is against Reason, is *absurd*, and therefore also to be rejected and refuted.

XII. But lest any man should, by misinterpreting any Miracle, suspect that he has found in the Scripture something that is repugnant to the Light of Nature or right Reason; it concerns me now to come to the **FOURTH** and last Part of my present Subject, *viz.* the *Interpretation* of Miracles. Of this therefore I will deliver *some* of many Thoughts, and by an Example or two endeavour to illustrate them.

It very rarely happens, that men relate any Action simply, and as it was really done, without mixing with it somewhat of their own Judgement. Nay when they see or hear any thing new and surprizing, unless they circumspectly defend themselves from their own pre-conceiv'd  
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Opinions, they are for the most part prone to be so blinded and pre-possess'd by them, that they apprehend in their Brain quite another thing than what they see or hear to have come to pass; chiefly if the thing done exceed the Capacity of either the Reporter, or the Hearer, and when the same is likely to bring some considerable Advantage or Emolument to the Reporter, if it be believ'd to have come to pass in such or such a manner. Hence doubtless it comes, that men in their *Chronicles* and *Histories* rather relate their own Conjectures and Opinions, than things as they were really done; and that one and the same Case or Event is by two men, of different Opinions and Judgments, so diversly related, that they seem to speak, not of one Case, but two; and in fine, that it is not very difficult to a man that reads with attention, to investigate the Opinions of the *Chronographer* or *Historian* meerly from his Narrations. To confirm this, I might bring hither many Examples, as well of *Philosophers*, who have written Natural Histories, as of *Chronographers*; if I did not think it superfluous so to do. I will therefore content my self with one pertinent and remarkable Example taken out of *holy Scripture*, and then leave the Reader from thence to judge of the rest.

In the time of *Joshua*, the *Hebrews* (perhaps with all other Nations) believing the *Sun* to be carried round the *Earth* in its diurnal Motion, and the *Earth* to stand still perpetually; accommodated to this their pre-conceiv'd Opinion, the *Miracle* that happen'd to them, when they were fighting against those five Kings of the *Amorites*. For they have not simply related, that that day was longer than any other day; but that the *Sun* and *Moon* then stood still, or ceas'd from their Motions. And this could not but serve mightily to their advantage, at that



that time, to convince their *Ethnick* Enemies, who adored the *Sun* and *Moon*, and to prove by Experience it self, that those celestial Luminaries were under the Command of another God, at whose beck they were forced to stop their Course, and change their natural Order. Wherefore they conceiv'd, partly from Religion, partly from their pre-conceiv'd Opinions, the thing to have come to pass far otherwise than it might really have happen'd; and related the same accordingly. To interpret therefore Scripture-Miracles, and to understand from the Narrations of them, how they really happen'd; 'tis necessary to know the *Opinions* of those who first reported them, and who transmitted them down to after-Ages by their Writings; and to distinguish the Narrations from that which their Authors Senses might represent to their surpriz'd *Imaginations*: otherwise we shall confound their Opinions and Judgements with the *Miracle* it self, as it really came to pass; nay more, we shall confound also things which have really happen'd, with things purely *imaginary*, and which were only *Prophetick* Representations. For in Scripture many things are related as real, and which were also believ'd to be real even by the Relators themselves; that notwithstanding were only *Representations* form'd in the Brain, and meerly *imaginary*: as that God, the supream Being, descended from Heaven (*Exod. 19.v.28.* and *Deuteron. 5.v.28.*) upon Mount *Sinai*, and that the Mountain therefore smoak'd, because God came down upon it surrounded with Fire; that *Elias* ascended to Heaven in a fiery Chariot drawn by fiery Horses: which were only Representations accommodated to their Opinions, who deliver'd them down to us, as they had been represented to them, *viz.* as things actually done. For all men of Understanding above the Rabble,

ble, know, that God hath no right nor left Hand, that he is neither moved nor quiet, uncircumscrib'd by Place, but absolutely infinite, and that in him are comprehend-  
 ed all Perfections. All these Proprieties of his, I say, are known to those considering men, which judge things from the Perceptions of a pure *Intellect*, and not as the *Imagination* is affected by the outward Senses; as the Vulgar is wont, which therefore imagines God to be *Corporeal*, and like an Emperor sitting in a Throne above the Stars in the Convexity of Heaven, the distance of which they believe not to be very great from the Earth. From these gross Imaginations and Opinions of common Heads it is, that the Writers of *holy Scripture*, accommodating their Narrations many times to vulgar Capacities, describe many Events in Expressions familiar and suitable to those preconceiv'd Opinions; which therefore ought not to be receiv'd by *Philosophers* as real. Besides, to understand how *Miracles* really happen'd, 'tis requisite to be well vers'd in all the *Idioms*, *Phrases* and *Tropes* of the ancient *Hebrews*: for he that doth not understand and attend to all these, will be apt to feign and add to the Scripture many Miracles, which the Writers of it never thought of; and consequently remain ignorant, not only how the Miracles that have been written, came to pass, but even of the true Sence and Mind of the Writers. For Example, the Prophet *Zacharias* (*chap. 14. v. 7.*) speaking of War to come, saith; *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark — But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but at evening time it shall be light, &c.* Now by these words he seems to predict a mighty Miracle; and yet to a man conversant in the Language, Phrases, and Style of the Prophets, it will soon appear, that nothing is signified  
 by



by him but this, *That the Battel shall be fiercely fought by both sides, the event of it all the day known only to God, but in the evening the Jews shall obtain the victory*: for in such Allegories and Phrases, the Prophets were wont to foretel and write the *Victories* and *Calamities* of Nations, signifying *those* by *light* and day, *these* by *darkness* and night. Thus we find *Esaia* (*chap. 13.*) describing the Ruine and Devastation of *Babylon* in these words; *The Stars of Heaven, and the Constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the Sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the Moon shall not emit the splendor of her light*: which Prodigies no man of Understanding believes to have happen'd at the Destruction of that mighty City; as neither those the same Prophet adds in the subsequent Verse; *I will shake the Heavens, and the Earth shall remove out of her place*. Thus again in *chap. 48. vers. ult.* to signifie to the *Jews*, that they should return from *Babylon* to *Jerusalem* securely, and suffer no thirst in the Journey, he saith; *And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts; he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them*. By which words, I say, *Esaia* intended only this, that the *Jews* shall find Fountains in the Deserts (as Travellers commonly do) with which they shall mitigate their thirst. For, when by the consent of *Cyrus* they went to *Jerusalem*, 'tis evident even from the History of their return thither, that no such Miracles happen'd to them. After this manner of speaking, in the holy Scripture occur very many things, which were only old modes of expression among the *Jews*, and therefore ought not to be interpreted according to the Letter, chiefly where Miracles are rashly supposed to be intimated. To recite all these, is (after what I have here said) unnecessary; and all I would have remark'd in the general, is only this, that the

*Hebrews* were accustomed in these and the like phrases to speak, not only *ornately*, but also, and chiefly *devotely*. For which very Reason in the 1<sup>st</sup>. of *Kings*, chap. 21. and *Job* 2. v. 9. is found, to *bleſs* God, for, to *curſe*: and for the ſame, they referr'd all things immediately to God, and therefore the Scripture ſeems to relate nothing almoſt but Miracles; and that too when it ſpeaks of things moſt plainly natural, of which I have already alledged ſome Examples. When therefore the Scripture tells us, that God *hardned the heart of Pharaoh*; we are not bound to believe, that it ſignifies any thing, but this, that *Pharaoh* was *contumacious* or obſtinate. And where 'tis ſaid, that *God opened the Windows of Heaven*, we may ſafely interpret the words to contain no other ſence but this, that Rain fell down from the Clouds in great abundance; & ſic de aliis. If our Reader then, laying aſide all ſuperſtitious Prejudices, ſhall be pleas'd to conſider and remark theſe *Inſtances*, and withal know, that in the *Scripture* many things are related *briefly*, without any Circumſtances, and imperfectly; I am fully perſwaded, he will therein find nothing that can be apodictically demonſtrated to be repugnant to the *Light of Nature* or right Reason, but on the contrary many things, which how obſcure ſoever they may ſeem at firſt, he will be able, upon a little Examen and Meditation, to underſtand and interpret according to the genuine ſence and meaning of the Writer. And thus, I think, I have with ſufficient clearneſs proved what I intended:

XIII. But yet, before I put an end to this Diſcourſe, there is one thing more, of which it concerns me to advertiſe the Reader, and 'tis this; That the Method here propoſed for Interpretation of Miracles, ought not to be accommodated to the prejudice of *Propheſies* occurring fre-



frequently in the Scripture. For of *these* nothing ought to be affirm'd, but what may be concluded from Fundamentals *reveal'd* in Scripture; whereas the Conclusions precedent in this Discourse, have been inferr'd only from Principles known by the *Light of Nature*. Propheſie is a thing which transcends the limited Capacity of humane Understanding, nor can any man comprehend wherein chiefly it consisteth, unless from Fundamentals *reveal'd*, which are purely *Theological*. But as for *Miracles*; because what I here principally enquire (*viz.* whether we may safely admit, that in Nature any thing can possibly happen, that is repugnant to the eternal Laws of Nature, or that may not follow from them) is a Question *Philosophical*: I have therefore thought it, as more proper, so also more advised, to investigate the same from Fundamentals or Principles known by the *Light of Nature*. I say, *more advised*; because I could have solved this Question from only Positions and Fundamentals of the *Scripture* it self; to manifest which, I will now briefly shew the possibility thereof.

The Scripture in some places affirms of Nature in general, that she perpetually observes a fixt and immutable Order; as in *Psal. 148. v. 6.* *He hath established them* [the Heavens and all the Celestial Host, &c.] *for ever: he hath made a Decree which shall not pass:* and *Jerem. 31. v. 35, 36.* *Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the Sun for a light by day, and the Ordinances of the Moon and of the Stars for a light by night, which divideth the Sea when the waves thereof roar.—If those Ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then, &c.* And the Philosopher in his *Ecclesiast. 1. v. 9.* saith expressly, *that nothing new happens in Nature:* and in *vers. 11, 12.* illustrating that Assertion, adds, *that though a thing may come to pass, which seems*

new, yet really 'tis not new, but the like hath happen'd in Ages so long since past, that no memory of them has reached down to us : *There is*, saith he, *no remembrance of former things ; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after.* Again in chap. 3. v. 2. he saith, *That God hath appointed a season to every thing, and a time to every purpose under the Sun :* And at vers. 14. he saith farther, *I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever : nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, &c.* All which Texts most clearly teach, that Nature always keeps her fixt and immutable Order, that God hath been the same in all Ages, as well unknown as known to us, and that the Laws of Nature are so perfect and fertil, that nothing can be added unto, nothing detracted from them, and in fine, that *Miracles* are not lookt upon as new things, unless by reason of mens Ignorance. These remarkable Truths therefore are ( you see ) expressly taught in the *sacred Books* : but in them it is no where taught, that any thing can happen in Nature, which is repugnant to her eternal Laws, or which is impossible to follow from them ; and therefore I think it unreasonable, to impute such Doctrine to the *Scripture*. To these Arguments be pleas'd to subjoyn some of our precedent Reasons, viz. that *Miracles* require Causes and Circumstances, that they necessarily proceed from the divine Decree, that is ( as we have shewn even from the *Scripture* ) from the Laws of Nature and her establisht Order, and in fine, that *Miracles* may be wrought also by *Seducers* and *Impostors*, as is plain from *Dent. 13.* and *Mat. 24. v. 24.* and then, I presume, you will perceive it to be genuinely consequent from all these Premises, that *Miracles* have been *natural* things, and ought so to be explicated, as to seem neither *new* ( that I may use *Solomon's*



mon's word ) nor repugnant to Nature. And that you may the more easily so explicate them, I have set down some certain *Rules* taken from the *Scripture* it self. But though I say, that the *Scripture* teaches these things, yet I do not mean that it teaches them as *Precepts* or *Documents* necessary to *Salvation*, but only that the *Prophets* embraced them as we do : and therefore it is free for every man to think of them, according as he shall judge it most conducive to his devoting himself to the *Worship* of *God*, and the *Exercise* of *Religion*, with his whole mind. Which agrees exactly with the *Sentiment* of that wise and grave Author *Josephus*, exprest in the conclusion of his 2d. Book of *Antiquities*, in these words. *Nullus verò discredat verbo miraculi, si antiquis hominibus, & malitia privatis via salutis liquet per mare facta, sive voluntate Dei, sive sponte revelata : dum & eis, qui cum Alexandro Rege Macedonia fuerunt olim, & antiquitus à resistantibus Pamphiliicum mare divisum sit, & cum aliud iter non esset, transitum præbuit iis, volente Deo per eum Persarum destruere imperium ; & hoc confitentur omnes, qui actus Alexandri scripserunt. De his itaq; sicut placuerit unicuiq; existimet.* In which *Josephus* modestly declares his Judgement of Miracles. I add also that of *Valesius*, a pious man and profound Philosopher, who ( *in sacræ Philosophiæ cap. 57. in Psal. 77.* ) having asserted that the *Manna* wherewith *God* fed the *Israelites* in the *Desart*, though different in some qualities from other sorts of *Manna* described by *Physicians*, was yet produced *secundum leges naturæ* ; wisely subjoyns this Defence of himself. *Neq; enim elevo Dei concussam, cum naturales rerum causas investigo ; sed laudo infinitam ejus sapientiam, qui ita omnia disponit, ut etiam quæ portentosissima sunt, videantur bona ex parte secundum naturalem rerum ordinem evenisse.*

Sanctus Augustinus in Epistola 7. quæ est ad Marcellinum.

Si ratio contra divinarum Scripturarum auctoritatem redditur, quævis acuta sit, fallit verisimilitudine; nam vera esse non potest: rursus, si manifestissimæ certæq; rationi, velut Scripturarum sanctarum objicitur auctoritas; non intelligit qui hoc facit, & non Scripturarum illarum sensum, ad quem penetrare non potest, sed suum potius objicit veritati nec quod in eis, sed quod in seipso, velut pro iis, invenit, opponit.

Burnetius in Telluris Theoria sacra, lib. 1. cap. ult.

Ut in deducendis rerum originibus, non temerè recurrendum est ad Primam Causam; ita nec in explicandis effectibus singularibus, ad Miracula. Hoc omnes agnoscunt, atq; etiam frustra ac temerè eò recurri, cum res aliundè per causas naturales satis explicari potest. Satis autem explicatur aliquod Phænomenon, cujus rationes redduntur adequatæ, idq; juxta analogiam Naturæ: ita scilicet, ut cætera Natura eidem explicationi consentiat & suffragetur.

Dr. Sprat in his Hist. of the Royal Society, pag. 360.

It is a dangerous Mistake, into which many good men fall; that we neglect the Dominion of God over the World, if we do not discover in every Turn of humane Actions many supernatural Providences, and miraculous Events. Whereas it is enough for the Honour of his Govern-



vernment, that he guides the whole Creation in its wonted Course of *Causes* and *Effects*: as it makes as much to the Reputation of a Princes Wisdom, that he can rule his Subjects peaceably by his known and standing Laws, as that he is often forc'd to make use of extraordinary Justice to punish, or reward.

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FINIS.

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